



House of Commons  
CANADA

## **Standing Committee on the Status of Women**

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FEWO • NUMBER 040 • 1st SESSION • 38th PARLIAMENT

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**EVIDENCE**

**Wednesday, September 28, 2005**

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**Chair**

**Ms. Anita Neville**

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## Standing Committee on the Status of Women

Wednesday, September 28, 2005

•(1535)

[English]

**The Chair (Ms. Anita Neville (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.)):** I welcome everybody back this afternoon.

I extend a particular welcome to our two new colleagues from the Bloc. We note that you bring a lot of experience and history in this area. As we discussed earlier, it is something you feel passionately about. Welcome. I'm pleased to have you here as part of the committee.

The agenda for today is to try to determine what our future business will be over the course of the next period of time—I think we have nine weeks until the Christmas break—and to try to plot out the nature of the work we will do over this period of time.

I don't know whether our new colleagues have been briefed by members of their own party on what we've been doing, but last year we tabled four reports in the House of Commons: one on increased funding for Status of Women Canada, and the others on core funding, gender-based analysis, and pay equity. We have some of the responses back, which I understand should have been out to you today. When we finished in June, we were doing a study of parental benefits for self-employed workers; that's where we finished at the end of June.

Our task today is to try to determine what we do over the course of the upcoming nine weeks. There are a number of options. I met with Julie...

I'm sorry, but I should have welcomed the fact that we have a new clerk with us today, Carmen DePape. We welcome you, and we're very happy to have you here. I know that you've worked with many in the room before, so we're very pleased that you can join us. I should have done this right at the beginning. I'm sorry.

We met a little earlier today to talk about what some of the options might be. Quite clearly, they include the continuation of the parental benefits study, and quite clearly they include reacting to the responses that we received from the government on two of the reports, the one on gender-based analysis and the other on core funding. Carmen sent out those responses today.

So I'm just opening it up for some discussion, and if everybody is agreeable with this, I am just going to do it as I see your hands rather than by the prescribed way, and will see what the will of the committee is. There are certainly other options as well.

Sam, then Lynne, and then Jean.

**Hon. Sarmite Bulte (Parkdale—High Park, Lib.):** Thank you very much, Madam Chairman.

I think it's great that we have the government's responses to the reports. I haven't had a chance to read them yet, as I just got them this afternoon. I think we should take the opportunity to get the minister, perhaps, as well as the department, to come to talk to us about these reports once we've had a chance to look at their responses.

Then I would urge very strongly that we continue our study on the benefits for the self-employed. I think that's crucial and that we should move forward and perhaps review what we've done up to now. Maybe our researchers could put that together for us, but I think we should continue and finalize the report on that. I think we certainly have the time to do that within the timeframe.

•(1540)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Are there other comments?

Ms. Yelich.

**Mrs. Lynne Yelich (Blackstrap, CPC):** I just want to make a comment about the evaluation that the Status of Women program is now undergoing. I now understand that we won't know until October, and I sometimes wonder if we will be duplicating that work, and how effective we'll be, if we're still not done.

In many of the responses or sometimes in doing these reports, it's because we're waiting to find out about the funding for Status of Women Canada. So I just want to make a point about how effective we will be if we haven't cleared the women's funding yet. I just want to bring that point forward.

I think we also have some ideas that we would like to put forward, and Joy will be taking the lead on that, but you'll want to get other comments first.

**Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP):** I would support us reviewing the government responses to these reports and continuing with the study for parental benefits. I notice in the paper that Julie prepared for us that the estimates will also be coming up.

I wanted to flag for the committee's attention the Sisters in Spirit campaign, where the funding had been delayed. I think it would only take one meeting and would need to be dealt with sooner rather than later. When I looked at it earlier, I didn't realize there was quite so much urgency around it, but it appears it could be a number of months yet before the funding is actually released. The information we received was that it was only going to Treasury Board in October, so that could really delay it. Another five or six women, I believe, have gone missing since that initial funding was allocated.

As I think most of the committee members know, the Native Women's Association of Canada made a presentation at the United Nations back in February and have had several meetings since with the understanding that the funding was coming forward. As there was a person named as spokesperson for Status of Women Canada, Nancy Wong, I suggest that the committee ask Nancy to come before the committee and explain the state of the funding and the reason for the delay.

**The Chair:** Thank you. I have some information on that as well, but we'll come back to that.

Susan.

**Mrs. Susan Kadis (Thornhill, Lib.):** I concur with the direction of those who have spoken before in general in terms of the parental benefits, self-employed, and I think it's critical. I was very pleased to see that surfacing and was worried it might get thrown into the pile again. I think it really is very current and important that we deal with it now, and we have that time period available. As well, I agree we should have ministers here to go over these responses.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Joy.

**Mrs. Joy Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

There are two other issues. Last year I suggested we look at aboriginal women and the Marriage Act, the concerns around that and how we could put something together to support what's not happening on the reserves right now. The other issue that has come to my attention that I wanted to present before the status of women committee is the sexual slavery that's happening in North America. I've done quite extensive study on this over the past year, and it's not only alarming but is growing on a daily basis. Trafficking in persons is reported every year: 600,000 to 800,000 are trafficked across the borders. A good number of those come to Canada. Human trafficking now is a \$10 billion criminal industry.

No one is giving voice to it. No one is saying anything. Thousands of women are being forced. They come to our borders, their passports are taken, they're beaten, raped, and the gangs send them to brothels and things like that. I have a special interest in this because my son was in the joint forces unit for child pornography in Manitoba, and they took a lot of child pornographers down. That was only scraping the beginning of the surface. Of these people who are trafficked, 80% are female but 50% of that number are children. It's a very serious issue, and here in the status of women committee I think it gives us an opportunity to stop this kind of horrendous crime.

Those are the two issues I wanted to raise. I do feel it's very valuable to see the reports and listen to the ministers. I know there was documentation about the reports that come out. That's important too, but these two issues, to my way of thinking, are things that could really help women in our country.

The trafficking bill is now in the House of Commons, but it's even bigger than that, ladies and gentlemen. Our sisters, brothers, aunts, uncles, our communities will be touched and are touched by that now. I was over in the Ukraine, but it started before that. Studying the issue brought this to the forefront for me personally, and I think here in the status of women committee it would be very helpful to have more insight into this horrendous crime.

• (1545)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Christiane Gagnon.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ):** I have a few questions for you. I perused some documents prior to the committee meeting. I'm curious as to how you went about obtaining core funding. Could you clarify that for me? Did you meet with women's groups who discussed their precarious situation? Fine, that answers my question.

I also read in a background paper prepared by the Library of Parliament that aboriginal women have three concerns. Did you meet with these women to discuss their living conditions? Earlier, I believe someone said that this didn't happen. These are timely issues: women and violence and women and poverty. I believe you haven't broached these subjects.

The committee should give priority consideration to these issues. I apologize for straying somewhat from the topic at hand, but I'd like to know if we could focus our attention on this area, or has this already been done?

My final question is about trafficking in women. Bill C-49 is currently before Parliament for consideration. Obviously, it's quite alarming to see that many women and children, the most vulnerable members of society, are victims of trafficking activities and that Canada, as a transition country, is on the receiving end of this trade because the opportunities for this kind of activity are present.

As we know, the Justice Committee is now drafting a report, and many women are following this closely. The whole question of the legalization and criminalization of prostitution has a direct impact on matters, as does the permissive attitude prevalent in some countries.

I don't know if it's too late for the committee to study this issue, in light of Bill C-49 and the report on prostitution which may result in new policy directions. Will these be achievable goals, bearing in mind the impact on women?

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Thank you.

If I can respond, you're raising an issue, as is Joy Smith, that's really important for this committee: how do we work horizontally across government? How do we work with other committees that are studying some of the issues raised? Matrimonial property rights for aboriginal women have been studied and dealt with in some detail by the aboriginal affairs committee. That report has gone forward to government; the committee is waiting for a response for it, and one of the suggestions we've had informally is the possibility of having a joint meeting with the aboriginal affairs committee to try to look at the response from government and where they're moving on it. I don't know whether we want to revisit that issue and restudy it. That's up to the committee. That's one issue.

The human trafficking one, Bill C-49, is introduced into the House now, and it is going to the justice committee. It hasn't been at committee yet. Is there a way that, without duplicating efforts—calling witnesses twice—we can link? Does anybody have any suggestions on how we can do it? That's our real challenge as a committee. Women's issues don't go into a narrow box; they go across all departments. How do we do it?

Let me finish answering the question.

On the core funding, Christiane, we did two round tables specific to that issue. At the beginning of the committee, when we established as a committee, we did six weeks of consultations with community groups. Julie can provide you with the outcomes of those.

Four overriding issues came up, core funding being one. As a means of trying to address that, we brought together women from across the country. The purpose was specifically to talk about core funding and the issues they were experiencing, as well as to hear from government on what has and has not worked. Based on that, we developed a report and put it in.

I don't know whether that's answered all your questions.

Lynne.

• (1550)

**Mrs. Lynne Yelich:** Yes, I think you identified the real problem—that is, that we do overlap. I think that's an excellent idea to find a way to work with the other committees, either aboriginal or justice, depending on the issue. I see a format in place, by the way. The Senate has the joint committee with the House of Commons in different areas, like regulation, for example. So perhaps we could try to follow a format such as that. I think that's really important, because I found it very frustrating whenever we brought up some of these issues that it was being studied, either at aboriginal or justice committee, or it was just being studied. In this way, maybe we'll have a lot more action, especially with regard to violence to women, since it is on the rise.

**The Chair:** At some level, it's breaking new ground or figuring out new ways for committees to work, because to the best of my knowledge.... I'm sure there are precedents, but there aren't a lot. Maybe others know more than I do on how we work together, so let's come back to that and see how we might do it.

Joy.

**Mrs. Joy Smith:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

One other suggestion might be... I would also say that the Ukrainian-Canadian parliamentary group is also—I'm heading that aspect of this sexual slavery from Ukraine in terms of dealing with that issue from Ukraine. I'm on that. As a suggestion, I think it would be a good idea to invite people from those committees to give us a summary of what has happened so far, because in my examination of some of the work that's been done, the focus was different. For instance, in the justice committee, it was primarily on the prostitution that happens right in Canada. I'm talking more about people immigrating or coming to Canada from other countries and being stopped at our borders and at the American borders and being redirected into this kind of trade. So I think it's a very good idea to network with the other committees and see how far they've gone. It wouldn't take long to find out what the other committees are doing in these areas of aboriginal women and sexual slavery issues.

**The Chair:** On the trafficking issue, the justice committee will begin that. I'm on that committee. I don't know who are on the lists of witnesses that they're going to be calling, but we can certainly try to figure out something.

I have Nina, and then Christiane.

**Mrs. Nina Grewal (Fleetwood—Port Kells, CPC):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I think this is a very, very important issue that Joy is talking about—human trafficking and sex trade. I think what Joy means by human trafficking is bringing in women and children as sex slaves.

Is that what you mean, Joy?

Yes, that's what she means. I think all of us came to a consensus that this is really a very important issue. So if we can think about that....

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Christiane.

• (1555)

[Translation]

**Ms. Christiane Gagnon:** I don't know whether this could be interesting, or even possible, but when the Subcommittee on Solicitation Laws tables its report, perhaps members of that subcommittee could come here to discuss the report with us. We could then question them about any proposals regarding legalization or decriminalization. I don't know. We could also take the opportunity to make our position on this matter known. I'm not saying that we should be able to change anything, but it would be nice to get an idea of when the report will be released. I don't know whether this is possible or not.

It's the same with the Justice Committee. When that committee examines a topic that truly has to do with the status of women, shouldn't there be some form of cooperation? Shouldn't we be apprised of the reasons why the committee decided to pursue a certain course of action and informed as to which witnesses guided their thinking and what prompted them to make certain findings? Is that possible?

[English]

**The Chair:** Thank you.

When you say bring the women from the committee looking at prostitution, are you talking about members of the committee?

[Translation]

**Ms. Christiane Gagnon:** Yes.

[English]

**The Chair:** Yes, okay.

Russ.

**Mr. Russ Powers (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale, Lib.):** One thing that today has shown is there's absolutely no shortage of opportunities for this committee to explore. I'm not suggesting that we focus all of our attention on this, but we've done some extraordinary work over the seven months that the committee was actually in operation, and I don't think we want that work to fall. We need to ensure the reports come back, give them justice, and respond to them.

If there's a way for us to incorporate new items, I think perhaps Anita could speak to the co-chairs of the committee and the chairs of the other standing committees to find a mechanism, rather than going to every separate committee. There's a way we can coordinate our efforts. I think it's a good initiative from that standpoint.

I'd like to ensure that the continuity of what we started is attempted to be fulfilled before the Christmas adjournment. If there are new things to add, as has been suggested by Julie or Joy, then let's get them on the agenda and at least get started.

I think that Jean's suggestion is a very legitimate concern. Like all of you, I've had letters from some of the Sisters in Spirit people on their concern that the whole project, and the initiative that has gone along with it, will fail mainly because of a lack of an appropriate response and a funding envelope.

**The Chair:** Yes, Jean.

**Ms. Jean Crowder:** I know that it has been a challenge for us in terms of wanting to avoid any duplication and waste, for example, by calling back the same witnesses other committees have spoken to.

One of the things we talked about last time around was on the fact that we did not want to redo studies that have already been done. I think the library can do this for us in terms of gathering work that has already been done. Maybe there's a role for us to examine the work that has been done, looking for gaps or additional information that's required or a different perspective that hasn't already been studied.

I know that we've talked about a number of the issues. For example, on matrimonial property law, I don't know how long that committee spent on it or how many people they spoke to, but I think it would be unfortunate if we redid work that has already been done. It would probably be important for us to look for the gaps and to address the gaps through the work that has been done.

**The Chair:** Lynne.

**Mrs. Lynne Yelich:** I only have a question. Did the human resources committee ever study parental benefits, or would this be a first?

**Hon. Sarmite Bulte:** No.

**Mrs. Lynne Yelich:** Okay. Good.

**The Chair:** Paddy, and then Christiane.

**Hon. Paddy Torsney (Burlington, Lib.):** I have to agree with Jean. I also wasn't sure if it was my misunderstanding or not. I think that it's highly irregular to ask the same witnesses to come and give testimony and/or to have a committee chair justify why they went in certain ways. Maybe it wasn't meant to sound that way. I think that the library could get the background on why any committee pursued any particular line on something.

I did some work on the committee on prostitution. I know they've been covering a lot of issues. I haven't seen their latest report. Having a chair come to talk to us is one thing, but getting something from the library is probably more beneficial.

The other gap that I know exists, partly because human rights and development is only a subcommittee of the foreign affairs committee, is that one of Canada's strengths is particularly in development and focusing on women in development. We heard about it through the gender-based analysis stuff. We have a big push. We're investing an awful lot of money in Afghanistan and other places. We could do some in-depth work there. What are the things that are working? What are the things that we could use at home? There's the whole micro-credit stuff. There are some really neat opportunities within CIDA.

I sound like I'm pumping up our own team, but it is an area where there is a gender focus. There are things that are going well. It provides an example to other departments. It would highlight some things that we could ask the department to do better or more of. It's something that I know no other committee is doing. So I'd like to speak to that.

• (1600)

**The Chair:** Another idea in the mix.

Christiane.

[Translation]

**Ms. Christiane Gagnon:** I can respond to my Conservative Party colleague, because I sit on the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills Development, Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities. The issue of employment insurance, parental leave and self-employment may come up for discussion. We can't say that we've thoroughly examined the subject, but we'll have to see. Tomorrow, I'm attending a meeting at which future business will be discussed. Should this be one of the items of future business that we should consider? I don't know, but at the same time, we cannot duplicate another committee's work. We need to see where the status of women's fits in on the agenda.

This also relates to justice and social development. We need to see if this is an important issue to consider during the upcoming session. If we decide to study these matters, we will need to send our suggestions to the other committee for its consideration. Clearly, two committees cannot have the same agenda. For example, self-employment is a social development issue, and Minister Dryden is responsible for the parental leave file.

[English]

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Joy.

**Mrs. Joy Smith:** Thank you, Madam Chair. There's lots on the agenda today.

I guess from my point of view, I'm talking about three things. First, I brought forward two issues today, the Marriage Act and the trafficking of women and children, and there are many aspects to those issues. We need to find a way to find out what the left hand and the right hand are doing so that we can put something together effectively. On justice committees or on parliamentary groups, some of these issues are being addressed now. The problem is that the committees sit for such a short time, so it takes an awfully long time to get anything totally done.

As the status of women committee, we are.... I mean, who else is good at time management except women? There, I've said it.

The fact of the matter is, maybe we need to look at the process so there isn't that overlap you're talking about, and decide which issues are the most important....

Excuse me?

•(1605)

**Mr. Russ Powers:** They were just including me as an honorary woman.

**Voices:** Oh, oh!

**Mrs. Joy Smith:** Well, I stand to be corrected, but you're more than that, Russ.

Today I think we have to decide, first, which issues we're going to focus on in the timelines we have; second, the processes we're going to utilize to make sure these overlaps don't happen; and third, the productivity that will have an outcome that would reflect an action plan on these issues.

What I brought forward today...and I know there have been multi committees on prostitution and multi committees on trafficking, all across the country in different areas. I know that the police force I was on for two years was talking about it. That's not at a government level but at a local level.

When we see these numbers, when we look at the status of women, I think we have to see what's working and what's not working, as part of our mandate. When you see that trafficking has grown and that crime has grown so badly, obviously all the committees haven't worked. We need to do something to make it happen. These other issues we're talking about are very important too. So around this table, we're going to have to sort out and decide, whether it's by a show of hands or whatever it is, which ones we can do in the space of the few weeks that we're working.

**The Chair:** Thank you. That's exactly what we're trying to do, prioritize how we move forward for the next nine weeks.

Jean.

**Ms. Jean Crowder:** I have just a couple of points.

We started the parental and self-employment before we broke, so it feels to me as if we have a piece of work that's unfinished. We started it and didn't finish it.

I just noticed that at the bottom of these notes, under "Initiate a New Study", it says that we're going to get a binder within a week to

fill in some gaps of information around aboriginal women, women and violence, and women and poverty. So it feels as if we don't have a complete set of information to set our priorities. If we agreed to finish parental benefits and deal with the two reports that came out, that would give us some space to set the agenda for the rest of the term, once we get this basic piece of information.

In terms of priorities for the study, we held six weeks of hearings with women across Canada and heard their priorities and set some priorities. So if we're going to come out with something that's totally outside of what we heard from women, I think we need to figure out a way to run that by women in some way. I feel it needs to be in the priorities that women brought forward; otherwise, we're just discounting whatever consultation happened.

**The Chair:** Thank you. Paddy.

**Hon. Paddy Torsney:** I would just echo Jean. I think we should proceed for the next couple of weeks, or ask our researchers to proceed, on the parental benefits. I hope you got a copy of the *Globe and Mail* article on Monday in the "Careers" section, about very successful women running companies and how difficult their choices were.

If we could get those background papers and if the chair could be instructed by the committee to speak to John Maloney to find out when the federal committee on prostitution is tabling its report, perhaps that offers an opportunity. Then we have a bill that's going to the justice committee on trafficking; let's move that forward. Let's see if we can either substitute ourselves in at that committee or make sure that if we want to feed in witnesses or something like that.... Each of us has that capacity within our own caucuses. That would offer us some opportunity. Then we could plan the rest after you get back to us on what the other committees are doing, what their timelines are, and if they would like our support.

**The Chair:** Thank you. It sounds like a plan, but let me—

**Mrs. Lynne Yelich:** Again, we want a quick response on the women's group core funding, but you can't until evaluation has been completed, and that's not until the end of October.

•(1610)

**Hon. Paddy Torsney:** Three weeks.

**Mrs. Lynne Yelich:** Yes, we have to wait for it, and that's still a month away.

But the other point I'd like to make is I think you started something here by saying we have to be a little more efficient or more effective, and we're not going to be if we're going to be if we're going to....

Justice has studied, or is studying right now, the trafficking. It is a big issue. It is a big problem. We were talking about prostitution. When the work's being done, let's find a way to work together instead of causing all the expenses of witnesses and even the false hope witnesses have when they come here. That's what I find really frustrating for them as well. They come here, especially—and I haven't seen Beverly Jacobs yet since the Stolen Sisters funding has been deferred, but I can't imagine what she's gone through with the announcement being made. She was so excited that she cried. She thought everything was over, only to find out now that the funding has been deferred. So I think we have to find out how much meat and how much teeth we're putting into our work. Are we just meeting here Tuesdays and Thursdays?

**The Chair:** I'm trying to bring some focus to this. What I'm hearing is we've got two new issues, not new to Parliament, but two issues that have been introduced over here. One has been studied already and the other has been studied by a subcommittee but has been referred to another committee. How do we mesh those two with our committee horizontally? We're halfway through, or part way through, a study on parental benefits and we have the response, certainly on gender-based analysis, that could warrant the committee looking at, as well as the one on core funding.

I need some direction from you, colleagues, on how we move this agenda forward. It strikes me that the challenge in this is that we have an agenda that challenges how we work horizontally on the matrimonial benefits and on the human trafficking. It hasn't been done widely in government and we're probably going to be breaking some new ground to do it. How do we do that as well as honouring what we've heard from the women's groups in our consultations?

I have Joy, then Sam, then Paddy.

**Mrs. Joy Smith:** I would like to make a suggestion. I think we need to be more efficient and I think we need to complete the report. When you look at the timelines—October 27—in terms of when the departmental performance reports will be tabled, when you look at all these other initiatives, I don't see why we can't compile the information that has been done now on the trafficking of persons, particularly women and children, and see where we stand in terms of what's happening here in Canada right now. To be quite honest, I think there are other focuses that have been missed. I think it has been focused in one way. We need to share this information to know where we stand.

The second thing is that, on the aboriginal issue, in spite of the fact that the Marriage Act has been talked about ad nauseam for years, nothing is really happening for these women on reserves.

So I would suggest a take-action plan where we have people who work on these three issues come back and report, and then we as a committee take a look at what we can do with it to enable or empower legislation to happen that will really effect change.

I guess my problem is seeing all of these things in committee, this report, that report, the other report, and people are out there suffering. It's not working when crime is growing at this rate, when we talk about trafficking; it's not working when aboriginal women are being kicked out of their homes and we're sitting around a committee table; and it's not working when we can't get these reports together and make an action plan.

To be quite frank, nobody cares out there how many reports we have. What we have to do is know what we're doing by those reports—we know that—and then we need an action plan. So I would suggest that we sit down and talk about process, what process we're going to put in place to allow these three areas to go forward.

**The Chair:** Sam.

**Hon. Sarmite Bulte:** I concur with what Jean said. I think we should finish the work that we're doing. That should be the immediate. We have the report, and then we can plan on doing this other thing. But I think we need to finish what we've started and not leave that up in the air.

All these ideas are good, but let's finish what we've have, and then we can think about where we move forward.

**The Chair:** Paddy.

**Hon. Paddy Torsney:** I want to help bring some clarity to this. We have meetings on October 4, 6, 18, 20, 25, and 27. October 27 is the day the report comes out. So we're talking about six meetings. Even if we were to have witnesses at three of those meetings, assuming, on parental leave, specifically for self-employed women, the consultants, etc., and then you're looking at writing a report, that's three meetings probably as well. Then you're into November, with meetings on November 1, 3, 15, 17, 22, and 24. So we have to be clear about how many things we can tackle.

If we had some meetings on self-employed women and we had information from the other committees about what they're doing with the bills that they have—so that's action—that are in committee being studied to get passed in the House of Commons so that we can get the laws enacted, then we will see what else we might want to do in some of those areas.

The other thing that I want to highlight in terms of development and what have you is the big WTO meetings taking place in Cancun. It has huge impact for women right around the world. There are very few women at the table, and so maybe using a couple of the meetings in November to talk about the impact of liberalized trade on women would be helpful, the opportunities that are presented, and to make sure we're providing the parliamentary oversight. We could have the negotiators come here. We could bring focus to this issue.

Again, it ties in development; it ties in something that is actually happening around the world and is pretty darn important, to my way of thinking.

**An hon. member:** Another thing on the table.

**Hon. Paddy Torsney:** Well, it's part of development, if you want.

• (1615)

**Mrs. Lynne Yelich:** I think that's very easy to concur with, Paddy. You'll probably find us quite agreeable, because we're interested in getting that done. What I'm not interested in is having to overlap again. I'm hoping human resources has not, and if they have, then I think we should do a joint committee in some way.

Madam Chair, with all due respect, I do think we have to find a way not to have overlap. I'm just hoping that whatever we do will include that.

But I think we could agree with that quite easily. I do think, on the violence, Joy's initiative or her recommendations are very important; however, I do believe what's being said around the table is probably a good idea as well.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

I have Jean and then Nina.

**Ms. Jean Crowder:** I want to make a point about the government response. I don't think most of us have had a chance to look at this. But just quickly scanning it, on the gender-based analysis, in particular, it's probably fairly important that we do look at it because part of the recommendation is that in the budget cycle, which is now, there is a direction to the finance department to actually consider GBA in some way. It is probably fairly important that we do take a look at these reports as well, so as not to lose those.

I would agree with Lynne, I think it was, who said that it's important on the women's one, the core funding, to wait until that other study comes out. But on the GBA one, we should be dealing with it.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Nina.

**Mrs. Nina Grewal:** Madam Chair, I think that since there are three or four issues here and it's really hard to see with which we should proceed, let's have a vote and that will decide it.

**The Chair:** That's what I'm going to do. I just have to know what we're voting on, that's all.

**Mrs. Lynne Yelich:** I would like us to go back to how you opened the meeting, and that is, how are we going to be more effective? I'm not ready to jump into the parental benefits until we find out how the overlap is going to be done. And I was also thinking specifically about Joy's recommendations today. It is being studied now, and you want to work when other committees are working, but let's find out for the future business how we are going to best address the parental benefits. Are we going to try to set up a joint committee of some sort, or are we just going to study it and then put together some recommendations, table it in the House, and then see it next year again? That's my fear.

**The Chair:** That's sometimes what happens.

I've been advised by the clerk that we don't set up joint committees. We have joint meetings with other committees. That is the process we follow.

Sam, and then I'll try to sum it up. It's baby steps along the way as we do that. Sam.

**Hon. Sarmite Bulte:** Just to the issue of the benefits on the self-employed, I know that no study has been done and it hasn't been on the agenda. We've taken this. It's our agenda. We've taken this. There's never been an interest in all the years that I've been here.

**Mrs. Lynne Yelich:** You've done reports, though, on this subject, haven't you?

**Hon. Sarmite Bulte:** Just recommendations.

• (1620)

**Mrs. Lynne Yelich:** Exactly. But you did a lot of interviews, so why can't we take that report and work with that?

**Hon. Sarmite Bulte:** I'm just saying it's HRSD. No, they haven't been.... I just think it's so important, and I don't want to lose it. I want to grab that as our agenda. It's never been on their radar screen since I've been here. I'm so excited that we grabbed it, because I think it's really important that we move that, especially with the number of women who are self-employed and how little they do earn in their self-employment capacity. I guess Joy's passion is....

**Mrs. Lynne Yelich:** I just want it to work.

**Hon. Sarmite Bulte:** Yes, I do too, and I want the recommendations.

You know what, Lynne? Let's try to get it so we can get it into the budget. Let's look at the short term.

**Hon. Paddy Torsney:** I have a technical question. How many meetings have we had on benefits for self-employed women? Two or three? Three. So can we finish this? We're in the middle of it. We've already started it. We've already had all these witnesses who came and talked to us. We should finish this subject and make a recommendation for the budget and do the analysis of the report that we got back on GBA. That should be a priority, because in terms of action it sets us up to have an impact on other committees and on other policy framework. So let's make sure we're getting it done and finishing off on the self-employed women file.

**Mrs. Lynne Yelich:** Can we set up a joint meeting then with human resources to make sure that we give it—

**The Chair:** We're the only ones doing it at this point in time.

**Mrs. Lynne Yelich:** We want it on their radar as well. I just don't want another report tabled and not have any real response.

[Translation]

**Ms. Christiane Gagnon:** I'm a member of the Human Resources Development Committee. All we need to do is inform the members of this committee that the Status of Women Committee is currently studying this issue and advise them to await the report. Simply put, this should not be deemed a priority.

Tomorrow, the committee is meeting to discuss future business. If this topic finds its way on to the agenda, I'll report that it is currently being studied by the Status of Women committee. I don't think the committee will make this one of its priorities, because it has other topics to consider in the weeks ahead. I could say that we're looking at this, that we will be making recommendations and that, if they want to pursue the matter further, they should await our report.

[English]

**The Chair:** Excuse me. I'm getting a message from the translators that we have too many people speaking at once. Could we have some order?

Christiane, you have the floor.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Christiane Gagnon:** Since I'm a member of the Human Resources Development Committee, where the topic is up for debate, all I need to do is inform committee members that the Status of Women committee is already doing a study. I can ask them to wait until we've released our report, which should be around the holidays. If memory serves me well, I don't recall this being one of this committee's priorities in so far as future business goes. Other matters will be on the fall agenda. I think we can proceed and wrap up the report. Since we've already started, we can't leave matters in limbo, particularly since there aren't many weeks left until Christmas and we might need three or four weeks to finish up our work. I have no idea of the order in which we should proceed, but I think we can easily let the Human Resources Development Committee know that the Status of Women committee is doing a study and agree on that.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Thank you.

I'm going to ask for an informal show of hands—not as a formal vote—on the different items in front of us. How many would like to continue and complete the parental benefit study on EI for the self-employed?

Okay, so that's given.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Christiane Gagnon:** How many more weeks will we need to complete the study?

[*English*]

**The Chair:** It would probably require three to four meetings, unless something comes as a surprise in the upcoming presentations.

How many would like to follow up on the report we have back from government on gender-based analysis?

I'm seeing a majority would like some response on that.

How many would like me to follow up with the chair of the aboriginal affairs committee to see if, when they get their response back from government on the matrimonial property report—I'm not sure when it's due—we can have a joint meeting with their committee. I will ask our researcher, Julie, if she could distribute to all members of the committee what was prepared by the parliamentary library for that committee. It will bring people up to somewhat of a common level. Would that work for you?

•(1625)

**Mrs. Lynne Yelich:** You said that joint committees can't be struck. I wonder how Senate and House of Commons sitting committees get struck, because we are different; we are on a different committee, just like on regulations.

**The Chair:** The clerk advises me that it would require a change to the Standing Orders. That's not easy.

**Mrs. Lynne Yelich:** If there ever was a committee that overlaps, and seriously overlaps, it is this committee.

**The Chair:** Why don't we start with baby steps, seeing if we can do it through informal mechanisms? If we're successful, then we'll perhaps take it forward in another way.

**Mrs. Lynne Yelich:** That's what I was thinking. I know it's informal mechanisms, and, Madam Chair, I'm just trying to help you out.

**The Chair:** I appreciate that; thank you.

**Hon. Paddy Torsney:** I was trying to support you on discussing with the chair of the aboriginal committee, but can you also find out from Mr. Maloney what's happening with his committee?

**The Chair:** I don't know whether it's coincidental or not, but I just got an email from my office saying the justice subcommittee dealing with solicitation laws is considering its draft report at a meeting on Monday.

The timing is good. We can ask them. We might try to set up a joint meeting of the two committees to hear what they've done, and then make some decision on how to move forward on that.

Before I recognize Jean, let me note that the justice committee will be dealing with human trafficking, Bill C-49. I think Paddy's point is well taken. If there are members of this committee who are interested in that issue, see if you can substitute yourselves onto the committee in lieu of some of the regular members from your own party. That might be helpful in terms of having some cross-referencing, and then we can again try this joint committee piece with them.

I'm sorry; Jean is next.

**Ms. Jean Crowder:** I just didn't want to lose the Sisters in Spirit. I'm not sure where it would fit; it can be bumped off.

**The Chair:** I'm just trying to get some resolution as to how we're going to proceed, and then move forward.

Are we in agreement?

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Paddy Torsney:** Everyone...

[*English*]

**The Chair:** I don't know about that, but we're in somewhat of an agreement.

As for Sisters in Spirit, I have the same information you do—it's going to Treasury Board on October 17. What happens after that, and why it has taken so long to get there, I don't know. How quickly should it move through Treasury Board? It's disbursed.... My understanding is that Status of Women Canada will have responsibility for the management of the funds to Sisters in Spirit.

I've got Jean and then Russ.

**Ms. Jean Crowder:** I want to follow up. I don't know about protocol, but could the chair of this committee write to the person who was referenced or to the minister asking for a written...—

**The Chair:** I have no problem.

**Ms. Jean Crowder:** —so that we are informed about what was going on, because it's been delayed for so long?

**Mr. Russ Powers:** I wanted to say exactly the same thing.

**Mrs. Lynne Yelich:** And I would like a hard question to them: how they can make an announcement and have the reception giving this money, and then not deliver it? I would like that question posed directly and bluntly.

**The Chair:** Okay, we will do that.

Is there anything else, colleagues?

I think through a rather winding process we've come to somewhat of an agenda for the next while, so I would thank you all.

I'm going to be away for a short while. Nina Grewal will be taking over the chairing of the meeting in my absence. I hope not to be away too long. Thank you all for your help and your cooperation.

Do you have something, Russ?

• (1630)

**Mr. Russ Powers:** Are our meetings now to be on Monday?

**The Chair:** Monday and Wednesday, we're in this timeslot. We're going to try to keep this room as much as is possible. We were in this timeslot the first go around last term, and then we moved over to Tuesday and Thursday.

**Hon. Paddy Torsney:** Is that why I...? Are you our new clerk? Richard was our clerk.

**Mrs. Carmen DePape (Procedural Clerk):** I'm helping out while Richard is ill.

**Hon. Paddy Torsney:** Oh, I didn't know Richard was ill. Richard clerks the other committee I sit on, which is also in this timeslot. That's why I was a bit confused. Are you also doing his other committee?

**Mrs. Carmen DePape:** No, because I also have the health committee. There'll be someone else.

**The Chair:** Do you have another one in this timeslot? You shouldn't.

**Hon. Paddy Torsney:** This timeslot is for the Subcommittee on Human Rights and International Development. I'll have to check into that.

**The Chair:** We'll figure it out.

Thank you all very much.

The meeting is adjourned.

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